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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 14, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 14, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

EVRENSEL / CUMHURİYET / ÖZGÜR GÜNDEM: NGOs and environmentalist groups held demonstrations in Istanbul, Ankara and Tunceli to protest upcoming dam projects on the Munzur river and a gold-mining project that reportedly will be using cyanide to extract gold from ore in Ovacik district of Tunceli. Five hundred protestors in Tunceli marched chanting the following slogans: "Mining corporations, get out of Tunceli," "We won't allow extracting of gold with cyanide".

TERCUMAN / TÜRKİYE / ÖZGÜR GÜNDEM / EVRENSEL: People in the Karlıova district of Bingöl stayed outside all night in freezing temperatures because of an earthquake (measuring 5.7 on the Richter scale) that shook Bingöl the day before. Although there was no loss of life, a great deal of damage was done to homes. At present, authorities are unable to get information from fifteen villages that are cut off by snow. To date the Ministers of Health, Interior and Public Works/Resettlement have paid visits to the area.

ÖZGÜR GÜNDEM: The so-called "78'ers Initiative" in Mersin organized a meeting to demand that the fifteenth item of the Turkish Constitution be abolished so that those who have perpetrated coups in the past (i.e. military leaders) could be prosecuted. (Note: The fifteenth article of the Constitution allows for freedoms to be partially or entirely suspended during times of martial law or state of emergency. In a separate note, the 78'ers is a term referring to the generation that was engaged in protest in the 1970's, many of whom were killed or jailed during that decade. End note.)

EVRENSEL: Rabia Kurnaz, mother of Murat Kurnaz (23) -- who was allegedly imprisoned in Guantanamo for 3.5 years -- expressed her hope that her son might have been sent back to Turkey after hearing rumors that the U.S. will be sending back Guantanamo arrestees to their homelands. Kurnaz, who lives in Hamburg, Germany, thinks her son may have been brought to Incirlik Airbase in Turkey.

ÇUKUROVA'DA GERÇEK: Prof. Alper Akinoglu, President of Çukurova University, condemned statements made by Turkish author Orhan Pamuk to a Swiss newspaper. Akinoglu stated that the views of Orhan Pamuk, as expressed to a Swiss newspaper, on the Armenian genocide allegations are baseless and inaccurate.

ÇUKUROVA'DA GERÇEK: During the First Economic Cooperation Forum, held on February 18 in Adana, PM Erdoğan had Adana AKP MP Ömer Çelik on one side and Aytac Durak, AKP Mayor of Adana, on the other. Erdoğan, stating that Adana has "two bosses" (referring to Çelik and Durak), added that his government would "cut off the heads" of those who become involved in corruption, "even if they are people we have appointed to office."

HURRIYET (ÇUKUROVA): Six thousand apartment buildings were built after the 1998 earthquake in Adana to provide safer shelter for the earthquake victims. However, seven blocks worth of housing, comprising 70 flats, were left vacant and have been looted and plundered since then. The headman of the district complained that the vacant flats are now in wretched condition, and burglars and inhalant addicts inhabit them now.

EKSPRES: The city council in Mardin has convened to discuss the strategic plan for Mardin's local development. The Mayor of Mardin presided over the meeting and representatives of various NGOs participated in the event. The main point of interest during the meeting was how to prepare Mardin for the upcoming tourism season.

MILLİ GAZETE: TOBB (Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges) is undertaking the task of modernizing the Habur Border Gate by means of a Build-Operate-Transfer Project. The physical and technical infrastructure of the Habur Border Gate will be renovated and the gate's security will be strengthened. The project will reportedly begin in April and will cost 18 trillion Turkish lira (\$14,2 million).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. BOLGE: The volume of transactions in Adana Commodity Exchange has reached a record-breaking figure of

1,712,592,491,425,944 Turkish lira (\$1,3 billion) in 2004. This increase over 2003's figures is attributed to an abundance of products and price increases since last year.

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